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Humor and Its Appeal to the Child

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HUMOR AND ITS APPEAL

TO THE CHILD

BY

LEONA MARIE CARROLL

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

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1933

VITA

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Two recent empirical studies in humor in which college students were the subjects of investigation have centered about the point of individual differences. Although their aims were different the material for experimentation was similar, namely, humorous jokes from various sources. A survey of these led the writer to this question, what would be the reaction of children to somewhat similar humorous material?

With this question in mind the writer became interested in the following problem:

Are children consistent in preferring jokes of either the superiority or incongruity type when both types are presented for choice?

Is there a similarity in choice of type in

- (a) Grades 3A to 6A inclusive
- (b) In boys and girls
- (c) In children of different nationalities?

CHAPTER II

WORK IN THE FIELD

THEORIES OF LAUGHTER

Laughter and its relation to humor has been the subject of theory since the time of Plato and Aristotle.

Their views as regards the derision theory have been revived in the theory of Thomas Hobbes in the Seventeenth Century. His theory stated briefly is called that of "Sudden Glory". In it he tells us that we laugh when we are suddenly conscious of superiority in ourselves as compared with infirmities in others. Laughter is an expression of scorn, and humor is identified with egotism. (10:139)

Eastman says that this theory although one of the most famous is also one of the most incorrect. He accounts for its popularity because of its brevity. He believes, however, that Hobbes accounts for his inadequacy when he says that to laugh at absurdities we must abstract them from persons in order that they might be without offense. (ibid:140)

Kimmins holds that this theory does not take into account the laughter of children. If it did, he thinks it would not have been adhered to for such a long period of time. (21:12-13)

According to Maher, Hobbes's theory may hold good in some cases, but it does not account for many forms of humor.
(22:439)

To show how some of these objections can be understood Gilman explains them by saying,

But Hobbes's error and the error of his opposing critics will be seen when we notice that what Hobbes calls the "sense of superiority", is really our "sense of power", and that our sense of power in wit and humor is not felt toward persons or things as Hobbes supposed, but toward ideas. It is inward and mental, not external and personal.
(13:96)

Henri Bergson writing in the Twentieth Century stresses the meaning of the comic. He contends that when man tends to act like a machine, laughter is the result. He says, "Any arrangement of acts and events is comic which gives us, in a single combination, the illusion of life and the distinct impression of a mechanical arrangement". He also holds that laughter is a corrective and is used to avenge society for liberties taken with it. (4:96)

Eastman says it is the art of satire and not the nature of laughter that Bergson has written about.

According to Freud, the subject of humor is to be treated apart from that of wit and the comic. In his work, Wit and the Unconscious, he shows that an explanation of the comic furnishes at least one component for the understanding of humor. He holds that the release of painful emotions is

the strongest hindrance to the comic effect. If one can not defend himself from such pain, or one is affected by it, or participates in it, the comic effect eventually ends, but if the party is disinterested he shows by his behavior that the situation contains everything necessary for a comic effect. "Humor is thus a means to gain pleasure despite the painful affects which disturb it, it acts as a substitute for this affective development, and takes its place". (12:371)

"Humor disdains to withdraw from conscious attention the ideas which are connected with the painful effect, as repression does, and thus overcomes the defense automatism". (ibid:380) The energy resulting from the liberation of pain which was held in check finds a way of discharging and is changed into pleasure. He believes that it is the connection with the infantile that puts at humors disposal the means for this function. In childhood, only did we experience very intensively painful affects over which we as grown-ups would laugh today. By thus comparing his present ego with that of the infantile he experiences the elevation of his ego, of which humoristic pleasure gives evidence.

Humor, according to Eastman is a play instinct. The sense of humor is a primary instinct which originally only functioned in the state of play, and is related to the gregarious instinct of which smiles and smiling laughter appear

to be an inherent part. He holds that humor is not purely intellectual but emotional. In discussing jokes he says that a joke should not be explained, it must flash. The interest satisfied must not be too weak in proportion to the interest disappointed. The interest disappointed must not be too strong in proportion to the interest satisfied. (10: 224-36)

Kimmins says in discussing Eastman's theory that it refutes the theory that laughter is a sign of release, because of its infectiousness. No matter what one's state of mind or condition, if someone is enjoying a joke the enjoyment spreads to those hearing it. The fact that humor is infectious is sufficient for him to establish it among other instinctive adjustments of mankind to his environment. (21:51-52)

All these theories mentioned have been criticised by McDougall in his work, "A New Theory of Laughter". He points out the fact that Sully, Dugas, and Eastman have criticised early theories such as Hobbes's and Bergson's because of their inadequacy in taking into account all the varieties of laughter. He is in accord with this view but submits another inadequacy, namely, that they do not provide an answer to the question - "For what end did the humor species acquire this capacity for laughter?" (26:293) For him this is the fundamental of the

problems.

He holds, however, that Eastman is nearer to his theory than any of the others; he being in accord with McDougall's definition of instinct. For him Eastman's theory is inadequate because it does not answer the questions regarding the nature of the ludicrous and what laughter does for us. He points out man's nature in responding sympathetically to the emotions, pleasures, and pains of his fellow men whether he actually witnesses the expressions of those feelings or imagines them. Now, instead of really feeling the pain or displeasures man finds an antidote for them - and this antidote is laughter. Humor, he says (ibid:299) "...is essentially the taking up of the attitude of a spectator towards one's own mishaps and makes them the basis of witticisms".

Norman Maier of the University of Michigan, writing in the British Journal of Psychology for July, 1932, offers, "A Gestalt Theory of Humor". He defines his purpose as an attempt to study the mental processes involved in the humorous experiences. In his discussion he touches three points (I) Suddenness, (II) Objectivity, and (III) The Ridiculous.

Suddenness he explains has been pointed out by Wertheimer when he says, that the meaning of elements depends upon the configuration of which they are a part. When the

configuration changes, the meaning of the elements changes as a consequence. He mentions also the place suddenness has been given by writers such as Bergson and Gilman.

Objectivity implies that the content of humorous subject matter can not be subjective; it must be objective. We experience humor only when we do not sympathize or implicitly participate with the thing we regard as humorous. He says that objectivity may characterize productive thinking because the elements of such thinking are largely objective. Therefore, we must seek further for a distinction between the humorous and the reasoning experiences.

This distinction he holds is found in the element of the ridiculous. The ridiculous is logical only within the bounds of certain facts, and for this reason it is easy to take it lightly, thus encouraging an objective attitude. The final configuration, the ridiculous conclusion of a story, can thus be experienced with great suddenness. The humorous situation then is a very isolated thing and its configurations are not to be taken seriously. (23:69-74)

EXPERIMENTAL SURVEY

Lillian Martin of Leland Stanford University conducted what may be considered the first experimental study along the line of the humorous in an investigation entitled "Prospecting in the Field of the Comic". The purpose of her investigation was to become, "...directly and personally acquainted with some of the problems involved in "the comic", and to ascertain by actual trial the possibility of applying satisfactorily certain well known psychological methods to the solution of such problems". (24:36)

In this work she used three methods, (a) Undirected Introspection, (b) Experiment, and (c) Directed Introspection.

Twenty-eight pictures were given to a number of regents of the University. These pictures were selected from magazines and Sunday papers. The pictures in turn were laid before each regent, and introspections recorded. They found that the ideas and feelings of one picture are carried over to the other and partly determines its funniness. A smile on a picture may make one smile and call it funny when not really funny.

In another series, two pictures were presented at once. One picture remained all through until each picture was compared with it. This was repeated until each was com-

pared with the others. It was found that pictures decreased in funniness.

Again, in another series one picture was looked at for five minutes. They found that a picture which at first was comic may become not only indifferent but decidedly unpleasant.

Another series of experiments were given. One was to determine the constancy of the comic from day to day. Forty pictures were used, each being viewed for fifteen seconds. Regents gave reports, as to whether they were funny, moderately so, or indifferently so. This was done for six days. Some found some pictures funnier after several days, this was due to noticing things which were unobserved at first.

Another experiment of this series was given to determine the effect of lapse of time upon the comic impression, when the exposure of the picture is continued until not considered funny. Fifty pictures were used with five students. This was repeated twice with intervals of twenty-four hours between. It was found that the continuance of fun decreased in successive exposures at a given sitting and with a given exposure at successive sittings.

An investigation was made with music using pictures. It was found that sad music, sacred music, or light music may greatly increase the funniness of a picture, but they have

less power to decrease it.

Experiments were made with smiling and doleful faces. Within certain limits the broadness of the smile of a smiling face increased its funniness. The same is true of a doleful face. "A smiling face is more provocative of fun than a doleful one. That is we prefer in opposition to Hobbes's theory on the whole to laugh with others than at them". (ibid:70)

The presence of smiling and doleful faces helps humor more than those that are expressionless.

In order to determine the effect of size of a picture upon its funniness, another experiment was undertaken. The larger pictures had greater probability of being judged funnier. Then to discover the affect of exaggeration, pictures were made smaller, then larger. Increasing the size of a picture, and moving it increased its funniness.

The directed introspection which was given to sixty students was in the form of a questionnaire. Some of the more important questions were: Have you any associations in connection with this picture? Does the funniness grow out of these associations? Is there anything in particular in the picture itself which determines its funniness? After this the theories of Aristotle, Hobbes, and Schoepenhauer and many others were given. The question was then asked, "Which of the following theories partially or wholly explain the

funny of the picture you are examining?" (ibid:83)

She found that the theories given by the subjects were incomplete in some respects. They failed to take cognizance of phenomena which the reports show to have been most important. Many selected more than one theory. Only Schoepenhauer's was found applicable to every picture. She found that from the reports she would conclude that there is a subjective side to the comic situation as well as an objective side - "...the presentation of ideas in a new and startling relation, incongruous, contrasting, contradictory or what you will, and the reaction of the individual himself upon this conception while it is new to him." (ibid:110)

"From all this it is evident that the point of a joke is inherent in the comic situation, and its appreciation is an intellectual process of peculiar and marked characteristics". (ibid:110) This intellectual appreciation is not always the primary source of humor because for some the source of fun of the picture was due to the associations aroused.

While examining the Healy-Fernauld Picture Completion Test, its possibilities as an apparatus for investigating the comic occurred to Miriam Walker. This test represents a variety of independent occurrences, and in the representation of each some essential object is missing. A number of blocks are supplied which can be fitted into empty spaces where the

missing objects have been; some of these blocks bear the missing pictures, others have pictures of irrelevant objects. When the puzzle is used as originally intended, the problem for the child tested is to find and put in place the proper object for each picture. Thus in front of the child who is holding a saucer of milk must be placed the picture of an approaching cat; below the boy dropping an apple out of a tree must go the picture of the basket of apples and so on. There are ten such episodes. The drawings themselves are comic; the exaggerated expressions make the effect amusing even when the missing pieces are correctly supplied.

But in some of the episodes the effect is even funnier if the wrong object is substituted, and this suggested the use of the puzzle as a test of the comic. If, instead of the basket of apples below the tree, the cat is placed, it increases the degree of funniness.

The writer points out the fact that all authorities agree that a situation to be comic must involve an element of incongruity. In this experiment she finds that objects could be picked to fit in, which would show mere incongruity, or incongruity could be combined with appropriateness and thus an element of wit.

She decided, therefore, that it was worthwhile to investigate whether any significant differences exist between individuals in their susceptibility to the humor of the

purely incongruous, and that of the incongruous which involves also the appropriate.

The following method was used. For each of the vacant squares on the board three picture squares were selected. One of these was the appropriate one, which logically completed the picture; another was intended to appeal by an element of appropriateness in the midst of incongruity to a more intellectual sense of humor. As all the squares did not fit this arrangement, only those which did were used.

Eighty young college students, eighteen seventh grade boys and girls, and eighteen fourth grade boys and girls were the observers.

The pictures in their appropriate context were funnier to the fourth grade children, and to the seventh grade children than to the college girls. This she thinks may be due to the fact that young children are not bored by the commonplace. Mere incongruity was funnier to the seventh grade than either to the fourth grade or adults. There was much more individual variation in the taste for the purely incongruous among the adults than among the children. (33:304-07)

Gardner Murphy in his book Experimental Social Psychology, gives a report of work done by Hester, in humor.

Hester worked with ten pre-school children four to five years old; with twenty girls, age seven to ten years at a Y. W. C. A; with eighty-two women students at a New England College; and with twenty-three insane persons. Each of the pre-school children was asked to tell the funniest thing which he or she knew. The same was asked of the adolescent girls; but the answers were written down - each wrote the funniest thing she knew.

The college students were given a miscellaneous collection of jokes which were presented orally. They were rated by the students on a five point scale. Each girl then wrote the reasons for assigning such jokes as she did to class (I) the funniest of all. They were then told to write down the funniest jokes or experiences they knew. The stories cover a wide range representing puns, incongruity element, surprise, in fact - something to illustrate almost every theory of humor.

Strictly speaking she says the data are not comparable. It does bring out the magnitude of individual differences even when age, sex and social classification have been considered. (28:598-601)

At Harvard University in 1928, Barry made an investigation entitled "The Role of Subject-Matter in Individual Differences in Humor." His study attempted to show that

humor can also be approached from the side of meaningful content, that some topics are humorous to one person and not to others. If some subjects are humorous to one person and not to another then we have not only an individual difference but the possibility of finding out other individual differences, which if studied may explain the humor when it occurs.

This study was concerned with two persons. For this reason, he believes the results to be more suggestive than determinative. This study tests a method he says which may be used for further investigation.

The materials used were jokes clipped from various humorous publications. There were thirty-five sheets with items ranging from six to eight on them. Many types of jokes were represented, puns, superiority, etc; many topics were included such as prohibition, music, religion, and business. From six to nine sheets were used at a sitting. Five series were given with two week intervals between each series.

It was found that "A" enjoyed fighting and violence, and "B" enjoyed "the alcoholic jokes".

In order to discover whether the reactions would be the same when reading a book as when judging selected jokes, A and B were asked to read certain letters from a book. They were instructed to pick out the most humorous passages. "A" again picked out "jokes of violence".

Analysis of "B" was more difficult because his dislikes and emotional attitudes were not so clearly defined. He was found to be sensitive to ridicule and to have a tendency to identify himself with the leading character in any anecdote. There is a possibility that "B" might react sympathetically with an emotion which he himself has identified as fear.

Some of Barry's conclusions are:

- (I) Topics which are capable of evoking a humorous reaction in an individual seem to be frequently "loaded" for that individual with an unpleasant emotional affect.
- (II) It seems probable that the humor is due to a change of affective tone of the original perception from unpleasant to neutral or pleasant.
- (III) Introspections tend to be unreliable because of the repressions induced by the unpleasant component of the perception and because of an apparent tendency for the subject to rationalize. (3:122)

Kambourapoulou made a study of individual differences in humor, at Vassar. Her aim was to find out if individuals laugh at some situations rather than at others consistently enough to be grouped into types.

To furnish material for classification the students kept diaries for a week. They kept record of everything they laughed at during this time. Seventy diaries were turned in and after a very difficult process of analysis four classifications were used; two for superiority and two for incongruity. Classifications I and II are for superiority jokes, classifications III and IV are for incongruity jokes. Classification

I, includes all instances where the objective cause is the mental inferiority of another person: ignorance, mistakes, stupidity, simplicity, blunders, social breaks, absentmindedness, naive remarks and remarks of children except where the last create a funny situation and are not funny because of their stupidity.

Classification II, is similar to I, but differs from it, in that here it is a personally directed answer, a directed witty remark or teasing, in which another person is made inferior.

Classification III, includes instances where an unlooked for event or turn of conversation, whether voluntary or not, creates an incongruous situation, but the incongruity is not due to stupidity or ignorance, or when the laughter is not at a person but is enjoyment of an unexpected incongruous situation. This is called the incongruity of situation type.

Classification IV, includes puns, and clever remarks which are not directed at anybody in particular, also nonsense in general which is absurd and illogical, and seen as such is therefore humorous. This represents the type called incongruity in ideas.

The two superiority classifications represented humor considered "Personal", the two incongruity classifications rep-

resented humor considered "Impersonal".

Sixteen jokes corresponding to these four divisions were used. Then those who reported in the diaries took the test. They were to read the test and pick the jokes they thought funniest in the order of their funniness.

It was found that the consistency correlations tended to establish the fact that individuals are fairly consistent in preferring on the whole either the personal or the impersonal type of the humorous.

The students of better academic standing tended to enjoy the nonsense jokes more than the others. This shows that mental ability bore no relation to the personal and impersonal types of humor except for the above mentioned.

(20:268-78)

Kimmins in his book, Springs of Laughter reports a study made in England of English and American children in order to find out what children laugh at, at different ages. His investigation involved both visual and verbal humor. It consisted of a questionnaire to which the children wrote accounts of the funniest things they had read or heard, and the funniest sights they had seen.

A native of England, Kimmins secured his results in this country by the cooperation of American teachers.

He found that the laughter of pre-school children

and babyhood are similar. They laugh at funny antics of domestic animals and anything of an incongruous nature about the home. From seven to ten years of age with the girls, and eight to ten with the boys, the riddle is referred to frequently in the choice of funny stories. Fairy stories too, are popular at this age, but the appeal drops off especially in the older boys about twelve years. At seven years the misfortunes of others are quite frequently mentioned.

In accounts of laughter in the home at domestic events the girls records are more numerous than the boys. At the age of twelve, during the period of rapid growth, the type of funny story becomes of a much more extravagant nature. With the cessation of this period their humor reverts to the more normal type.

From twelve years to fourteen years the girls stories are mostly of the domestic character, while the boys show a greater range. Girls tend to a moral in their stories, but boys rarely do. Boys of fourteen who were working were found to have developed quite rapidly the superiority attitude toward humor. Girls of this age are still interested in the stories of children.

From this study Kimmins concludes that "verbal humor appears to run along the lines of the logical sense of incongruity and of reasoning ability; whereas visual humor appears

to depend rather on emotional development". (21:89)

He found in this study that fundamentally the humor of the London children was the same as the American. The stories given are similar, but the age at which they appear differ. In America the riddle appears later than in the English children, while the superiority element in stories of stupidity is much more developed in American children than in English children.

CHAPTER III

THE EXPERIMENT

MATERIAL AND PROCEDURE

In order to find out if children are consistent in preferring either the superiority or incongruity type of humor, when both types are presented for choice, this experiment was given.

The material used in this experiment consisted of fifteen jokes chosen from various current magazines and newspapers. The jokes were typewritten on two sheets of paper, and were lettered from A to O. The sheets were pasted in a booklet, thus making it possible for the children to use them without having to turn pages.

As the subjects of this experiment were children from Grades 3A to 6A inclusive, only those jokes were chosen which were considered easy enough for all to be capable of reading.

The subjects of this experiment were six groups of children, including boys and girls. Five of these groups were from Chicago Public Schools and one a Parochial School of South Bend, Indiana. In this study they are referred to as Groups A, B, C, D, E, and F.

Group A consisted of 155 children from Grades 3A to 6A inclusive, who were cosmopolitan in nature; Group B of 306 children, predominantly Italian; Group C of 300 children who were ninety per cent Jewish; Group D of 157 children of South Bend, who were about ninety-five per cent Polish; Group E of 121 children cosmopolitan in nature from a different section of the city than Group A; and Group F of 182 Colored children.

The total number of children, including all groups, was 1,221.

Group D, being a Parochial School, it had no beginning grades represented.

The children were given the booklet containing the jokes. They were then given a paper which they numbered from 1 to 15. They were next asked to read all the jokes, and to pick from the total list, the one they thought funniest. The letter of this joke was recorded opposite the number 1, on the numbered paper. They were then told to continue picking the remaining jokes in the order of funniness until every number on the paper had the letter of a joke recorded after it.

The children were told they could read the jokes through more than once, but were advised not to read them too many times.

No time allotment was given, and all were allowed to finish. It was found that the average time taken by Grades

Four to Six was twenty minutes; for Grade Three about twenty-five minutes.

In order to classify the jokes used, the classifications of Kambourapoulou were used.

All jokes where the objective cause was the mental inferiority of another, and those where there was a personally directed answer, witty remark or teasing, in which another person was made inferior were classified as superiority jokes.

The jokes classified as incongruity jokes included all those in which an incongruous situation was created, but this situation was not due to stupidity or ignorance, or did not include laughter at a person. They also included nonsense in general which was absurd, and recognized as such was therefore humorous. (20:268-78)

Applying these classifications to the jokes used, jokes B, D, F, K, and L were superiority jokes, the remaining ones incongruity jokes.

The first four jokes chosen by all the children were observed to determine if there was a choice of type preferred, and the results were tabulated.

JOKES USED

A. "Tell something about oysters."

"They are very lazy, as they are always found in beds."

B. When a certain little boy was requested by his teacher to say his lesson, which he didn't know, he timidly remarked:
"Grandmother says I should be seen and not heard!"

C. Mother: "Johnny, what do you mean by feeding the baby yeast?"

Johnny: "She's swallowed my nickel, and I am trying to raise the dough."

D. "I was in the middle of the jungle when suddenly I saw a tribe of savages charging down on me."

"Good heavens! What did you do?"

"I stared at them until I was black in the face, and they took me for one of their own tribe."

E. Teacher: "If I take a potato and divide it into two parts, then into four parts, and each of the four parts into two parts, what would I have?"

Little Emily: "Potato salad!"

F. Mamma: "Now, Freddy, mind what I say, I don't want you to go over into the next garden to play with that Binksis' boy; he is very rude."

Freddy was heard a few moments afterwards calling over the wall:

"Jimmy Binks, ma says I'm not to go into your garden because you're rude, so you come into my garden - I ain't rude."

G. Tenderfoot: "Say, do you know what they do with the holes in stale doughnuts?"

First Class Scout: "They break them up and use them to stuff macaroni."

H. "What is a detour?"

"The roughest distance between two points."

I. First Tenderfoot: "What is that bump you have on your forehead?"

Second Tenderfoot: "Oh, that is where a thought struck me."

J. First Student: "I wish I could be like the river."

Second Student: "Like the river? In what way?"

First Student: "Stay in my bed, and yet follow my course."

K. "Stop reaching across the table, Junior. Haven't you a tongue?"

"Yes, sir, but my arm is longer."

L. Lady in butcher shop: "Is that the head-cheese over there?"

Attendant: "No, ma'am, the boss ain't been in yet."

M. "Did you hear the cat last night? It sounded positively weird?"

"Yes, ever since she ate the canary, she thinks she can sing."

N. Landlady: "I'm sorry you don't seem to like that chicken ala king. I told the cook how to prepare it. Perhaps she didn't catch the idea."

Boarder: "I think it was the chicken she missed."

O. "I've eaten beef all my life and now I'm as strong as an ox."

"That's funny. I've eaten fish quite a bit, and I can't swim a stroke."

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF GROUPS TESTED

ARRANGEMENT OF TABLES

For the purpose of study the jokes which were selected by the children from the total list as their first four choices were observed. The results of each nationality group are recorded separately. Tables I, II, III, IV, and V are for Group A; Tables VI, VII, VIII, IX, and X, for Group B; Tables XI, XII, XIII, XIV, and XV, for Group C; Tables XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, and XX, for Group D; Tables XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, and XXV, for Group E, Tables XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, and XXX, are for Group F. Table XXXI, shows the frequencies for those preferring the superiority type of joke for all six nationality groups.

TABLE I
Percentages of Incongruity

Group A						
Grade	% of Incongruity for Three out of First Four Choices			% of Incongruity for First Choice		
	Boys	Girls	Average	Boys	Girls	Average
3A	88 %	33.3 %	61 %	88 %	77.7 %	83.6 %
4B	62.5 %	50 %	58 %	62.5 %	75 %	66 %
4A	63.6 %	37.5 %	52 %	54.5 %	62.5 %	57 %
5B	50 %	75 %	59 %	64 %	62.5 %	63 %
5A	66.6 %	25 %	57 %	93 %	100 %	94 %
6B	75 %	50 %	62.5 %	87 %	68 %	78 %
6A	60 %	38.4 %	51.2 %	65 %	53.8 %	60 %

RESULTS OF GROUP A

The first four jokes chosen by the children were observed to determine whether the children were consistent in selecting jokes of either the superiority or the incongruity type. It was found that the majority selected the incongruity type in preference to the superiority type, and for that reason the percentages of children preferring incongruity were computed.

In Table I, are recorded the percentages of incongruity for all those who picked at least three of their jokes in this type. These percentages were computed for each grade for boys and girls, and are recorded separately. The average results indicated in Table I, refer to the average for the grade when the results of both boys and girls are considered together.

Upon observation of Table I, it was found that in Grades 3A, 4B, 4A, 5A, 6 B, and 6A, the percentages of boys preferring the incongruity type exceeded those of the girls. Observation of the average results of boys and girls for the grades tested shows that in Grade 3A, 61% of the children preferred the incongruity type, in Grade 4B, 58% of the children; in Grade 4A, 52% of the children; in Grade 5A, 57% of the children; in Grade 6B, 62.5% of the children; in Grade

6A, 51.2% of the children. Only 5 children in this group out of 155 (see Table XXXI) preferred the superiority type. From these results it can be seen that some children were not consistent in preferring either the superiority or incongruity type.

In Table II, are recorded the number of times each joke was picked as a first choice by the boys and girls of the various grades. In Table III, are recorded the frequencies for choice two, in Table IV, the frequencies for choice three, in Table V, the frequencies for choice four. The letters at the left of Tables II, III, IV, and V, are the letters designating the jokes used. The order of recording them is kept uniform for all four choices.

From an examination of all the frequencies for all the jokes in Table II, it was found that the total number of frequencies for incongruity jokes was greater than for the superiority jokes. The percentages of children who picked an incongruity joke as a first choice are recorded in Table I, under the heading, % of incongruity for the first choice. On this first choice, 83.6% in Grade 3A preferred an incongruity joke; in Grade 4B, 66%; in Grade 4A, 57%; in Grade 5B, 63%, in Grade 5A, 94%; in Grade 6B, 78%, in Grade 6A, 60%. A majority of the frequencies of the jokes chosen in choices, two, three and four were of the incongruity type.

The jokes which were most preferred by this group of children were Jokes C, O, E, and A. They were jokes of the incongruity type.

TABLE VI
Percentages of Incongruity

Group B

Grade	% of Incongruity for Three out of First Four Choices			% of Incongruity for First Choice		
	Boys	Girls	Average	Boys	Girls	Average
3 A	52.9%	50 %	51 %	94 %	54 %	76.9%
4 B	55.%	44 %	48.8%	75 %	76 %	75 %
4 A	56.%	40 %	48 %	52 %	75 %	62 %
5 B	63.%	65 %	64 %	81 %	91 %	86 %
5 A	64%	47 %	55.8 %	94%	64 %	79 %
6 B	52.8%	48 %	50 %	52.8%	80 %	69 %
6 A	50 %	67.8%	58.9%	71 %	82 %	76 %

RESULTS OF GROUP B

The results of this group were computed in the same manner as those for Group A. The percentages of those consistent in preferring jokes of the incongruity type are recorded in Table VI. The percentages of boys and girls tend to be similar. The tabulations show that in Grade 3A, 51% of the children were consistent in preferring incongruity; in Grade 4B, 48.8%; in Grade 4A, 48%; in Grade 5B, 64%; in Grade 5A, 55.8%, in Grade 6B, 50%; in Grade 6A, 58.9%. 20 children out of 306 children in this group were consistent in preferring the superiority type. These results show that there were many children who were not consistent in preferring either type.

The frequencies for each joke picked as a first choice are recorded by grades for boys and girls in Table VII. The percentages of children preferring incongruity on this choice are recorded in Table VI. On this choice, 76.9% of the children in Grade 3A picked an incongruous joke; in Grade 4B, 75%; in Grade 4A, 62%, in Grade 5A, 79%; in Grade 6B, 69%; in Grade 6A, 76%.

The frequencies for each joke chosen as a second choice are recorded in Table VIII, for the third choice in Table IX, for the fourth choice in Table X. In these choices

the majority seemed to prefer jokes of the incongruous type. In this type, Jokes C, O, E, and A, had the greatest number of frequencies.

TABLE XI
Percentages of Incongruity

Group C

Grade	% of Incongruity for Three out of First Four Choices			% of Incongruity for First Choice		
	Boys	Girls	Average	Boys	Girls	Average
3A	65 %	72 %	68.1%	80 %	83 %	81 %
4B	57.1%	20.8%	37.7%	37.5%	61.9%	48.8 %
4A	57 %	40.9%	43.9%	73.6%	77.7%	75.6%
5B	55 %	50 %	52.6%	80 %	72.2%	76.3 %
5A	41.6%	41.1%	41.4%	66.6%	58.8%	63.4%
6B	52.1%	46.1%	48.9%	52.1%	57.7%	55 %
6A	50 %	38.8%	45.2 %	83.3 %	83.3%	83.3 %

RESULTS OF GROUP C

The results of Group C were computed in the same manner as those for Groups A and B. The percentages of children consistent in preferring the incongruity type are recorded in Table XI. In Grade 3A, 68.1% preferred this type; in Grade 4B, 37.7%; in Grade 4A, 43.9%; in Grade 5B, 52.6%; in Grade 5A, 41.4%; in Grade 6B, 48.9%; in Grade 6A, 45.2%.

Only 21 children out of 300 in this group were consistent in preferring the superiority type.

The number of frequencies for each joke chosen as a first choice are recorded in Table XII, those for the second choice in Table XIII, for the third choice in Table XIV, for the fourth choice in Table XV. The percentages of children preferring an incongruity joke as their first choice are recorded in Table XI. These tabulations show that in Grade 3A, 81% of the children picked an incongruity joke; in Grade 4B, 48.8%; in Grade 4A, 75.6%; in Grade 5B, 76.3%; in Grade 5A, 63.4%; in Grade 6B, 55%, and in Grade 6A, 83.3%.

The total number of frequencies for choices, two, three, and four, show a majority preferring the incongruity type.

Jokes C, O, and E, were most preferred by this group.

TABLE XVI
Percentages of Incongruity

Group D

Grade	% of Incongruity for Three out of First Four Choices			% of Incongruity for First Choice		
	Boys	Girls	Average	Boys	Girls	Average
3A	20.8 %	35 %	27 %	55 %	87.5 %	72.7 %
4A	56.6 %	56.2 %	56.5 %	68.7 %	63 %	65 %
5A	30 %	25 %	28.1 %	50 %	50 %	50 %
6A	35.2 %	61 %	48.5 %	58.8 %	72.2 %	65.7 %

TABLE XIX
Frequencies for Third Choice

Group D

[illegible]

RESULTS OF GROUP D

Group D, which was a Parochial School of South Bend, had no beginning grades represented. The percentages of children consistent in preferring incongruity are recorded in Table XVI. These tabulations show that in Grade 3A, 27% of the children were consistent in preferring this type; in Grade 4A, 56.5%; in Grade 5A, 25%; in Grade 6A, 48.5%.

In this group, 15 children out of 157 were consistent in preferring the superiority type.

The frequencies for each joke chosen as a first choice are recorded in Table XVII, for the second choice in Table XVIII, for the third choice in Table XIX, for the fourth choice in Table XX. The percentages of children preferring a joke of the incongruity type as a first choice are recorded in Table XVI. On this first choice 83.6 % in Grade 3A, picked an incongruity joke, in Grade 4B, 66%; in 4A, 57%; in 5B, 63%; in 5A, 94%; in 6 B, 78%; and in 6A, 60%.

The total number of frequencies for the second, third, and fourth choices show a majority preferring incongruity.

Jokes C, O, E, and K, were most preferred by the children of this group.

TABLE XXI
Percentages of Incongruity

Group E

	% of Incongruity for Three out of First Four Choices			% of Incongruity for First Choice		
Grade	Boys	Girls	Average	Boys	Girls	Average
3A	60 %	50 %	57.1 %	30 %	75 %	42.8 %
4B	33.3 %	54.5 %	45 %	44.4 %	36.3 %	40 %
4A	76.9 %	52.9 %	63.3 %	84 %	47 %	63.3 %
5B	50 %	0 %	50 %	66.6 %	100 %	71.4 %
5A	50 %	75 %	58.3 %	87 %	100 %	91.6 %
6B	62.5 %	66.6 %	63.6 %	50 %	66.6 %	54.5 %
6A	27.7 %	44.4 %	33.3 %	61.1 %	55.5 %	59.2 %

RESULTS OF GROUP E

The percentages of children who were consistent in preferring the incongruity type of joke are recorded in Table XXI. In Grade 3A, 57.1% of the children were consistent in preferring this type; in Grade 4B, 45%; in Grade 4A, 63.3%; in Grade 5B, 50%; in Grade 5A, 58.3%; in Grade 6B, 63.6 %, in Grade 6A, 33.3%.

There were only 13 children in this group of 121 who were consistent in preferring the superiority type of joke.

These results show that some children were not consistent in preferring either type.

The frequencies for all the jokes chosen as a first choice are recorded in Table XXII. On this first choice, 42.8% of the children in Grade 3A, picked an incongruity joke; in Grade 4B, 40%; in Grade 4A, 63.3%; in Grade 5B, 71.4%; in Grade 5A, 91.6%; in Grade 6B, 54.5%; in Grade 6A, 59.2%.

For the second, third, and fourth choices the total number of frequencies for incongruity exceeded those for superiority.

Jokes C, O, E, and K, were most preferred by this group.

TABLE XXVI
Percentages of Incongruity

Group F

Grade	% of Incongruity for Three out of First Four Choices			% of Incongruity for First Choice		
	Boys	Girls	Average	Boys	Girls	Average
3A	37.5 %	47 %	44 %	50 %	52.9 %	52 %
4B	50 %	58.8 %	54.8 %	57.1 %	82.3 %	70.9 %
4A	26.6 %	18.7 %	22.5 %	66.6 %	68.7 %	67.7 %
5B	69.2 %	28.5 %	55 %	69.2 %	42.8 %	60 %
5A	41.6 %	66.6 %	55.5 %	100 %	86.8 %	92.5 %
6B	54.5 %	55.5 %	55 %	54.5 %	77.7 %	65 %
6A	69.2 %	46.6 %	57.1 %	84.6 %	66.6 %	75 %

TABLE XXX
Frequencies for Fourth Choice

Group F

[illegible]

TABLE XXXI
Frequencies for Superiority

	Group A		Group B		Group C		Group D		Group E		Group F	
Grade	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
3A			1		1		4	3	2		2	2
4B			3	3	2						2	1
4A	1		1	1		1	2	2		1	2	8
5B					4							1
5A			2		5		3		2	1		
6B	1			4	2	4			1		1	1
6A	3		1	4	1	1		1	5	1	1	5
Totals	5		8	12	15	6	9	6	10	3	8	18

RESULTS OF GROUP F

The percentages of children who were consistent in preferring the incongruity type of joke are recorded in Table XXVI. In Grade 3A, 44% of the children were consistent in preferring this type; in Grade 4B, 54.8%; in Grade 4A, 22.5%; in Grade 5B, 55%; in Grade 5A, 55.5%; in Grade 6B, 55%; in Grade 6A, 57.1%.

There were 26 children in this group, out of 182 who were consistent in preferring the superiority type.

These results show that some children were not consistent in preferring either type of humor.

The frequencies for each joke chosen as a first choice are recorded in Table XXVII, for the second choice in Table XXVIII, for the third choice in Table XXIX, for the fourth choice in Table XXX. The percentages of children who picked an incongruity joke as their first choice are the following: For Grade 3A, 52%; for Grade 4B, 70.9%; for Grade 4 A, 67.7%; for Grade 5B, 60%; for Grade 5A, 92.5%; for Grade 6B, 65%; for Grade 6A, 75%. For choices two, three, and four, the total number of frequencies for incongruity jokes exceeded those for superiority.

Jokes C, O, E, and K, were most preferred by this group.

CHAPTER V

COMPARISON OF RESULTS OF GROUPS A, B, C, D, E, and F

In comparing the results of the various groups representing children of different nationalities, there seems to be no great difference in the percentages of children in each group, who were consistent in preferring the incongruity type. No one group is consistently higher or lower than the others. Nor does there seem to be any appreciable difference between the results of boys and girls. Neither does there seem to be any great difference in the results of the grades tested. Although the percentages of incongruity fluctuate from grade to grade, there seems to be no consistency in these fluctuations to either increase or decrease from grade to grade.

Observing the frequencies of the jokes chosen by the various groups it appears that the jokes having the greatest number of frequencies in one group, tend to have frequencies in the same proportion in the other groups. For instance, Joke C had the greatest number of frequencies in all the groups tested. In Groups A, C, D, E, and F, about one third of all the children in each group picked Joke C as their first choice. In Group B, one half of the children picked C as their first choice.

Jokes O and E had frequencies which were very similar in all groups. They ranked next to Joke C in the order of preference. Joke A, ranked fourth in the order of preference.

These four jokes belong to the type of humor classified as incongruity.

When the frequencies of these four jokes are added together, they represent about two thirds of the total number of choices in each group.

These jokes had the greatest number of frequencies in nearly every case in all four choices. This tends to indicate that the majority of children picked these jokes as either a first, second, third, or fourth choice.

Joke K, which belonged to the superiority type had the greatest number of frequencies for jokes of this type. This was true for all the groups tested.

The numbers of children who were consistent in preferring the superiority type were small in relation to the total number in each group tested who preferred incongruity.

The results of this experiment seem to indicate that the majority of children tested were consistent in preferring a type of humor. They seem to indicate also, that nationality does not affect the type of humor preferred.

Of the children who were consistent in preferring a

type of humor, the majority preferred the incongruous type.

In the experiment conducted by Kambourapoulou at Vassar, she found that college students on the whole were consistent in preferring either the superiority or the incongruous type of humor. The results of this experiment seem to show the similarity of response of the children tested in this experiment to that of college students, except that the children were more consistent in preferring the incongruity than the superiority type.

Many writers have pointed out the individual differences of both children and adults in choice of humor. This experiment seems to show that there are individual differences. This can be observed from the variety of jokes selected even on the first choice. However, there seems to be a tendency for all groups to have a majority of children preferring the same jokes.

This seems to indicate that when similar humorous material is read by children of different nationalities, that jokes having the most appeal for one nationality would also appeal in the same manner to other nationalities if they were comprehensible and within the experience of all.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this experiment a number of jokes representing jokes of the superiority and incongruity types were given to six groups of children of different nationalities. Each group consisted of boys and girls from Grades 3A to 6A inclusive. They read the jokes and recorded them in the order in which they thought them funniest. Their first four choices were observed to see if they were consistent in preferring either the superiority or the incongruity type.

It was found that a very small percentage preferred the superiority type, and that the majority preferred the incongruity type.

From the results of this experiment the following conclusions were formulated:

CONCLUSIONS

- 1 The majority of children tested in this experiment seemed to be consistent in preferring a type of humor.
- 2 The children on the whole preferred the incongruity type of humor.
- 3 The results of boys and girls tended to be similar.
- 4 There seemed to be no great difference in the results

of the various grades tested.

5 The results of different nationality groups were similar.

6 The jokes which appealed most to one group appealed most to all groups.

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The thesis "Humor and Its Appeal to the Child," written by Leona Marie Carroll, has been accepted by the Graduate School of Loyola University, with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is, therefore, accepted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree conferred.

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